

Problems In English Language Teaching According To Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to identify the problems encountered in teaching and learning English according to secondary school students and to determine the level of differentiation of students' perceptions of the problems in this regard. The population of the study consists of 24,850 secondary school students in Istanbul Sultanbeyli, while the study sample is comprised of 1261 secondary school students. The findings obtained from the study are the following: 1- According to the secondary school students, "teachers' getting angry at mistakes" is the highest factor encountered in English learning and teaching while "teachers' not being prepared for lessons" is the lowest factor. 2- As grade levels and the number of siblings increase, the students' perceptions on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning also rise. 3- There are no significant differences between the students' opinions on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning according to studying in public or private secondary school, parents' occupation, family income, taking/or not English courses, the place and the duration of the subsidiary course variables.

Key Words: Foreign Language, English Language Teaching, Learning-Teaching, Student, Secondary School.

INTRODUCTION

It has been a subject of ongoing research that what language is as a communication tool, how languages have emerged and evolved, and until today, many definitions and theories have been proposed about language (Roucek, 1968). Dilaçar (1968) states that language is a social system which reaches an agreement among individuals. Aksan (1977) also describes language as a versatile and advanced arrangement which provides thoughts, feelings and desires to be transferred to others through using the elements and rules common in terms of sound and meaning in a society. According to Soner (2007), Language was born with the occurrence of the first man described as hominid on Earth a million years ago. From the moment he came to earth, human being as a cultural asset has felt the need to communicate with the environment, and this led to the emergence of different languages in communities. Due to the fact that human being is a live speaking, language keeps up to date in all the ages.

Languages which are the product of ecology and geographical environment have begun to spread in different regions of the globe in time, and they have had different changes because of the reasons such as migration and interaction with other cultures. Some languages have subsisted only in their own communities due to the reasons such as being spoken in a limited geographical conditions and the difficulty of communication with other communities (Aydın and Erdal, 2007), while the utilization rate of some other languages is increasing day by day over the world. English is located at the beginning of this primary language. It can be said that being widely used in the world as both science and technology language, and the political and military power of the states using it as their mother tongue are the reasons for the spread of English (Canbulat and İşgören, 2005).

Foreign language teaching in the Ottoman period came into prominence especially after the second Constitutional Monarchy (1908), and English and German were implemented as optional foreign language lessons while French was mandatory lesson (Soner, 2007). With the establishment of the Republic, it was accepted in Turkey that a Western language teaching would be compulsory, and a second Western language would be an optional foreign language course in some schools (Çelebi, 2006; Sebüktekin, 1981). However French was placed on the top among the compulsory foreign language courses taught in the first year of The Republic (Soner, 2007; Aktuna, 1998). During this period, the state and private high schools providing foreign language training were established. In 1983, Foreign Language Education and Training Act No. 2923 including regulations related to foreign language teaching was enacted (Çelebi, 2006). English lessons in primary education institutions have become essential. Middle school and high school providing foreign language training, and secondary preparatory classes have been established (Akdoğan, 2010).

Since the 1800s, it is observed that the success at the desired level has not been attained in Turkey although it has been made efforts for foreign language teaching (Çelebi, 2006; Demirel, 1999). Although many different teaching methods such as different orientations, use of technological tools, different teaching methods have been applied for this issue, any system which provides the targeted level of foreign language teaching has not been established in Turkey (Gömleksiz, 2014; Kocaman, 1978).

In today's world, the importance of learning a foreign language especially English is vital. On the other hand, such reasons as globalization, economic development, technology and innovation in the field of computers, communication cause that English is becoming increasingly common, and becomes the most preferred and taught language (Şahin, 2013; Yıldız, 2006; Ergüç, 2004; Tezcan, 1996). In the New Age 21st Century, English is a global language and it can be easily reached the judgement that almost everyone must know English. Today, technological advances are faster than cultural change. Therefore, knowing a foreign language, especially English, is an integral part of life, i.e. existing. Bartu (2002) emphasizes that teaching a foreign language, especially English as lingua franca, is as important as the instruction of main language in such a world. In this context, the importance of English instruction unarguably emerges in terms of both capturing the global world conditions and adapt to them, and activating individual human strength in Turkey. In the literature (Soner, 2007; Aküzel, 2006; Bakeries, 1983), such factors as teaching methods, student's interest in and attitude towards foreign language, relationship between native language and foreign language, contribution of parents in foreign language teaching, number and quality of teachers, class sizes, density of other courses, relationship between social environment and English use, lack of equipments, managers' attitudes have been put forward as the causes of failure in English learning and teaching.

With this study, it is aimed to put forward the problems encountered in English teaching-learning processes according to secondary school students. In accordance with this main purpose, the problems encountered in English teaching learning according to secondary school students were examined in terms of the variables as gender, grade level, number of siblings, type of school, parents occupation, family income level, taking/or not refresher course, the place and the duration of the course.

METHOD

In the study, descriptive research method in the survey method was used. The population of the study consists of 24,850 secondary school students studying in the secondary schools in Istanbul Sultanbeyli in 2014-2015 academic year, while the study sample is comprised of 1261 secondary school students selected by proportional sampling method. Problems Encountered in English Teaching and Learning Survey, which was developed by Ergüder (2005) and used as the data collection tool in the study, adapted by being protected largely and finalized by being received on expert opinions. As the result of reliability analysis of the survey, Cronbach's alpha (α) value was found to be 0.897.

FINDINGS

1- Findings Related to the Research Problem:

What Are The Problems Encountered in English Teaching and Learning According to Secondary School Students?

Table 1. The Percent and Means of the Responses of the Survey Items Given by the Secondary School Students

		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree		\bar{X}
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
A1	I do not like English lessons.	497	39,4	228	18,1	230	18,2	170	13,5	136	10,8	2,38
A2	I'm bored in English lessons.	443	35,1	316	25,1	267	21,2	149	11,8	86	6,8	2,30
A3	I think the English will not work for me in the future.	602	47,7	210	16,7	153	12,1	119	9,4	177	14,0	2,25
A4	I see English as a course just to pass the class to take notes.	597	47,3	326	25,9	145	11,5	110	8,7	83	6,6	2,01
A5	I have difficulty in understanding what to read in English.	274	21,7	264	20,9	311	24,7	252	20,0	160	12,7	2,80
A6	I have difficulty in understanding what to listen in English.	300	23,8	275	21,8	297	23,6	232	18,4	157	12,5	2,73
A7	I have difficulty in speaking English.	278	22,0	274	21,7	289	22,9	257	20,4	163	12,9	2,80
A8	I have difficulty in getting my thoughts in writing in English.	324	25,7	276	21,9	259	20,5	234	18,6	168	13,3	2,71
A9	I have difficulty in learning the grammar of English.	377	29,9	282	22,4	263	20,9	201	15,9	138	10,9	2,55
A10	That Turkish and English grammar rules do not resemble each other hinders me to learn English.	515	40,8	309	24,5	228	18,1	115	9,1	94	7,5	2,17
A11	I do not know how to work for English.	432	34,3	282	22,4	228	18,1	163	12,9	155	12,3	2,46
A12	I do not spend time outside of class to learn English.	415	32,9	293	23,2	234	18,6	180	14,3	139	11,0	2,47
A13	I do not use technology in teaching English.	422	33,5	266	21,1	217	17,2	178	14,1	178	14,1	2,54
A14	I do not have enough written resources in foreign language.	372	29,5	298	23,6	263	20,9	194	15,4	133	10,5	2,55
A15	I do not attend the classes in order not to my friends during the lesson.	638	50,6	241	19,1	150	11,9	115	9,1	117	9,3	2,07
A16	Our teacher cannot transfer well what he/she knows to us.	764	60,6	207	16,4	126	10,0	71	5,6	93	7,4	1,82
A17	Our teacher does not come adequately prepared to lessons.	781	61,9	231	18,3	116	9,2	46	3,6	87	6,9	1,75
A18	Our teacher is angry at the mistakes we make.	318	25,2	178	14,1	248	19,7	190	15,1	327	25,9	3,02
A19	Grammar is being intensively processed in our English class	277	22,0	234	18,6	409	32,4	183	14,5	158	12,5	2,77
A20	Our teacher does not make speech activities in lesson.	624	49,5	243	19,3	174	13,8	98	7,8	122	9,7	2,08
A21	Our teacher does not process listening texts in the lesson.	678	53,8	233	18,5	140	11,1	97	7,7	113	9,0	1,99
A22	Assignments that our teacher give are too much for me.	533	42,3	274	21,7	193	15,3	106	8,4	155	12,3	2,26
A23	Our teacher does not care much those who do not understand the lesson.	595	47,2	232	18,4	192	15,2	100	7,9	142	11,3	2,17
A24	Our teacher does not use technological tools (computers, projectors, smart boards, etc.) in English instruction.	510	40,4	170	13,5	150	11,9	165	13,1	266	21,1	2,60
A25	Our teacher cannot make lessons enjoyable.	546	43,3	262	20,8	182	14,4	112	8,9	159	12,6	2,26
A26	Our teacher does not seem eager while processing the lesson.	648	51,4	282	22,4	179	14,2	71	5,6	81	6,4	1,93

A27	I do not understand the English pronunciation of our teacher.	519	41,2	275	21,8	279	22,1	97	7,7	91	7,2	2,18
A28	Our teacher process the lesson entirely in Turkish.	596	47,3	342	27,1	174	13,8	73	5,8	76	6,0	1,96
A29	I do not like our English textbooks.	507	40,2	260	20,6	194	15,4	125	9,9	175	13,9	2,36
A30	I think that English exams are above our levels.	465	36,9	229	18,2	294	23,3	129	10,2	144	11,4	2,41
A31	Our English lessons are instructed the teachers from other branches.	769	61,0	217	17,2	121	9,6	65	5,2	89	7,1	1,80
A32	Subsidiary course materials (computer, projector, sound system, etc.) are not enough in our school.	394	31,2	181	14,4	178	14,1	184	14,6	324	25,7	2,89
A33	Weekly course hours for English are not enough.	476	37,7	232	18,4	195	15,5	141	11,2	217	17,2	2,51
A34	The students who want can get more English lessons in our school.	399	31,6	209	16,6	294	23,3	173	13,7	186	14,8	2,63
A35	I cannot find a comfortable working environment at home.	616	48,9	234	18,6	167	13,2	114	9,0	130	10,3	2,13
A36	My family does not encourage me to learn English.	703	55,7	195	15,5	164	13,0	82	6,5	117	9,3	1,97

According to Table 1, when examined the means of the responses of the survey items given by the students, it is seen that the 18th item (\bar{X} : 3,0238) “Our teacher is angry at the mistakes we make” has the highest mean.

According to Table 1, the most negative items which affect English learning and teaching according to the students are respectively as following from highest to lowest: the 32nd item “Subsidiary course materials (computer, projector, sound system, etc.) are not enough in our school” (\bar{X} : 2,8914); the 5th item “I have difficulty in understanding what I read English” (\bar{X} : 2,8097); the 7th item “I have difficulty in speaking English” (\bar{X} : 2,8041); the 19th item “Grammar is being intensively processed in our English class” (\bar{X} : 2,7708); the 6th item “I have difficulty in understanding what I listen to English” (\bar{X} : 2,7391); the 8th item “I have difficulty in getting my thoughts in writing in English” (\bar{X} : 2,7193); the 34th item “The students who want can get more English lessons in our school” (\bar{X} : 2,6336); the 24th item “Our teacher does not use technological tools (computers, projectors, smart boards, etc.) in English instruction” (\bar{X} : 2,609); the 9th item “I have difficulty in learning the grammar rule of English” (\bar{X} : 2,5567); the 14th item “I do not have enough written sources in foreign language” (\bar{X} : 2,5535) and the 13th item “I do not use technology in learning English” (\bar{X} : 2,5432).

According to Table 1, when examined the means of the responses of the survey items given by the students, it is seen that the 17th item (\bar{X} : 1,7526) “Our teacher does not come to class enough prepared.” has the lowest mean.

According to Table 1, the items which affect English learning and teaching at least according to the students are respectively as following from highest to lowest: the 31st item “Our English lessons are instructed the teachers from other branches” (\bar{X} : 1,801); the 16th item “Our teacher cannot transfer well what he/she knows to us” (\bar{X} : 1,8279); the 26th item “Our teacher does not seem eager while processing the lesson” (\bar{X} : 1,9334); the 28th item “Our teacher process the lesson entirely in Turkish” (\bar{X} : 1,9619); the 36th item “My family does not encourage me to learn English” (\bar{X} : 1,9794); the 21st item “Our teacher does not process listening texts in the lesson” (\bar{X} : 1,996); the 4th item “I see English only as a lesson in which I can get marks and pass the class” (\bar{X} : 2,0135); the 15th item “I attend to the lesson in order not to embarrass to my friends during the lesson” (\bar{X} : 2,0738); the 20th item “Our teacher does not make speaking activities in the lesson” (\bar{X} : 2,0888); the 35th item “I can not find a comfortable working environment at home” (\bar{X} : 2,134); the 23rd item “Our teacher does not care much those who do not understand the lesson” (\bar{X} : 2,1768).

2- Findings Related to the Sub-problems:

- 1- Are the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning different according to gender?

Table 2. Distribution of the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning by gender

Gender	n	\bar{X}	df	F	p
Female	614	2,2252	,60961	1,029	,310
Male	647	2,4606	,63491		

According to Table 2, there is no significant difference between the male and female students' opinions on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning ($p>0.05$).

2- Are the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning different according to grade level?

Table 3. Distribution of the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning by grade level

Grade	n	\bar{X}	df	F	p
5th Grade	322	2,1550	,63482	21,772	,000
6th Grade	269	2,2759	,61391		
7th Grade	398	2,4178	,62884		
8th Grade	272	2,5364	,58689		

According to Table 3, there are significant differences between the opinions of the students studying in different grade levels on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning ($p<0.05$). These differences are between the 5th and 6th grade students, and 7th and 8th grade students. The higher the grade level of the students, the problems perceptions about English learning and teaching also increase.

3- Are the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning different according to school type?

Table 4. Distribution of the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning by school type

School Type	n	\bar{X}	df	F	p
State Secondary School	1118	2,3715	,63706	3,510	,061
Private Secondary School	142	2,1463	,57080		

According to Table 4, there is no significant difference between the opinions of the students studying in state secondary schools and private secondary schools on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning ($p>0.05$).

4- Are the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning different according to mother occupation?

Table 5. Distribution of the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning by mother occupation

Mother Occupation	n	\bar{X}	df	F	p
Housewife	1089	2,3519	,62950	2,247	,062
Worker	116	2,3868	,66830		
Artisan	24	2,3102	,56896		
Officer	31	2,0287	,63596		
Other	1	1,8889			

According to Table 5, there is no significant difference between the opinions of the students whose mothers' occupations are different on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning ($p>0.05$).

5- Are the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning different according to father occupation?

Table 6. Distribution of the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning by father occupation

Father Occupation	n	\bar{X}	df	F	p
Not working	55	2,4717	,57324	1,602	,072
Worker	720	2,3818	,64134		
Artisan	231	2,2733	,57061		
Officer	93	2,2506	,66158		
Other	162	2,3462			

According to Table 6, there is no significant difference between the opinions of the students whose fathers' occupations are different on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning ($p>0.05$).

6- Are the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning different according to families' income?

Table 7. Distribution of the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning by families' income

Monthly Income	n	\bar{X}	df	F	p
0-750 TL	177	2,4046	,63299	2,113	,097
750-1500 TL	545	2,3764	,60333		
1500-2500 TL	318	2,3063	,65884		
2.500 TL	221	2,2813	,66401		

According to Table 7, there is no significant difference between the opinions of the students whose families' income are different on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning ($p>0.05$).

7- Are the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning different according to number of siblings?

Table 8. Distribution of the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning by number of siblings

Number of siblings	n	\bar{X}	df	F	p
0	37	2,2417	,62642	3,048	,010
1	201	2,2616	,63419		
2	310	2,3248	,67157		
3	362	2,3208	,62177		
4	187	2,4376	,62498		
5+	164	2,4643	,57273		

According to Table 8, there are significant differences between the opinions of the students whose sibling numbers are different on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning ($p<0.05$). These differences are between the students who have no sibling and have only one sibling and the students whose sibling number is more than 5. The problem perceptions of the students on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning whose sibling number is 4 and more are higher than the other students.

8- Are the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning different according to the condition of getting course?

Table 9. Distribution of the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning by the condition of getting course

Course Status	n	\bar{X}	df	F	p
Yes	189	2,3485	,66907	,858	,354
No	1072	2,3461	,62738		

According to Table 9, there is no significant difference between the opinions of the students who take subsidiary course for English and who do not take subsidiary course on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning ($p>0.05$).

9- Are the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning different according to the place of the course?

Table 10. Distribution of the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning by the place of the course

Place of Course	n	\bar{X}	df	F	p
Private Teaching Institution	160	2,3630	,68923	,180	,835
Language Course	11	2,2803	,51796		
Tutor	13	2,2692	,62684		

According to Table 10, there is no significant difference between the opinions of the students whose course places are different on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning ($p>0.05$).

10- Are the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning different according to the duration of the course?

Table 11. Distribution of the problems encountered by the students in English teaching and learning by the duration of the course

Duration of Course	n	\bar{X}	df	F	p
0-3 months	81	2,2545	,68887		
3 month-1 year	44	2,5467	,68291		
1-2 year	38	2,3596	,68985	2,464	,047
2-3 year	15	2,4889	,46467		
3+ year	6	1,8333	,14803		

According to Table 11, there are significant differences between the opinions of the students whose duration of the course are different on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning ($p < 0.05$). The problem perceptions of the students on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning who take courses for 3 and more years are lower than the other students.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study which aims to state the secondary school students' opinions about the problems encountered in English teaching-learning processes, the students see the "teachers' getting angry at mistakes" as the most important factor which affect negatively English learning and teaching while they see the "teachers' not being prepared for lessons" as the lowest factor. It can be said that these answers about the reasons for failure in English learning and teaching overlap with some other research results (Şahin, 2013; Karabıyık, 2011) in the literature. This situation shows that foreign language teaching-learning processes are not only cognitive-based, but also associated with affective domain. Therefore it can be said that teaching-learning process should be organized in this context. The students show mostly the lack of subsidiary course materials and having difficulty in understanding what to read in English as the other problems encountered in the English language learning and teaching. This finding overlaps with the other research results (Çelik & Kocaman, 2016; Akdoğan, 2010, Peker, 2007; Oğuz, 1999) in the literature.

There is no significant difference between the male and female students' opinions on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning. Gök Çatal (2015) also shows in her study that there is no significant difference between the students' problem perceptions according to gender variable. Nevertheless, there are no significant differences between the students' opinions on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning according to studying in public or private secondary school, parents' occupation, family income, taking/or not English courses, the place and the duration of the subsidiary course variables. However, the higher grade levels and higher number of siblings are there, the students' perceptions on the problems encountered in English teaching and learning also rise.

The following suggestions can be made for the research results and future studies: 1- Teachers should be given competences for taking into account the affective characteristics of students and teaching in this context in the process of learning a foreign language. 2- What kind of renovations can be done in English teacher education programs should be put forward. 3- Studies related to parents, school administrators, academics and policy makers should be done about the problems encountered in English learning and teaching.

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